

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 020900

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, AS, US, OVIP

SUBJECT: PEACOCK VISIT

FOR HARROP

1. VISIT OF OPPOSITION SHADOW FOREIGN MINISTER ANDREW PEACOCK WENT VERY WELL. DURING WEEKEND AND TWO DAYS IN WASHINGTON PEACOCK MET WITH LONG LIST OF PROMINENT AMERICANS INCLUDING: ETHEL KENNEDY, SENATOR PERCY, ROBERT MCNAMARA, AND SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SCHLESINGER.

2. AMBASSADOR GREEN MET WITH PEACOCK AT DEPT. MORNING OF JANUARY 28. PEACOCK EXPRESSED FOLLOWING VIEWS: ALTHOUGH THERE HAS NOT BEEN MUCH FOCUS ON ISSUE SINCE NOVEMBER, BECAUSE OF HOLIDAY SEASON, PEACOCK CURRENTLY FELT CHANCE OF ANY ELECTION BEING FORCED DURING 1974 WAS NOT VERY GREAT. HE IS CLEARLY THINKING IN TERMS OF A 1975 ELECTION, AND ALTHOUGH HE BELIEVES LIBERAL-COUNTRY COALITION MIGHT WIN AN EARLY ELECTION, CONSIDERS IT MIGHT BE AGAINST COALITION'S LONGER TERM INTEREST TO DO SO. PEACOCK MENTIONED THAT UNDER AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION, THE FACT THAT THE QUEEN WILL SHORTLY BE OPENING A SESSION OF PARLIAMENT AT CANBERRA COULD BE CONSIDERED TECHNICALLY

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TO WIPE LEGISLATIVE SLATE CLEAN, THUS REQUIRING NEW

BEGINNING FOR ENTIRE PROCESS THAT WOULD AGAIN SET THE STAGE FOR A DOUBLE DISSOLUTION.

3. ON RECENT LEAKS OF AUSTRALIAN MATERIAL RELATING TO EARLY 1973 FRICTIONS BETWEEN US AND GOA, PEACOCK SAID HE FELT MATTER HAD NOT ATTRACTED MUCH ATTENTION, COMING AS IT DID DURING THE HOLIDAYS. HE VOLUNTEERED, MOREOVER, THAT US ATTITUDE OF NOT MAKING ANY RESPONSE TO MATTER WAS, IN HIS VIEW, PRECISELY THE CORRECT ONE. IN SUM, HE SAW LEAKS CAUSING LITTLE DAMAGE TO US-AUSTRALIA RELATIONS BUT WOULD INJURE GOVERNMENT.

4. PEACOCK DESCRIBED BARNARD VISIT AS USEFUL IN REMOVING ISSUE OF US INSTALLATIONS FROM CENTER OF THE STAGE IN AUSTRALIA. HE WAS GENERALLY COMPLIMENTARY OF BARNARD, THOUGH NOT SEEING HIM AS A VERY FORCEFUL LEADER.

5. GREEN ASKED PEACOCK FOR HIS VIEWS ON WHITLAM'S ULTIMATE INTENTIONS IN RESPECT TO US INSTALLATIONS IN AUSTRALIA: DID PEACOCK THINK WHITLAM HOPED TO EVENTUALLY HAVE US PRESENCE TOTALLY REMOVED? OR WOULD WHITLAM ARRIVE AT A POINT WHERE HE FELT THE REMAINING US PRESENCE WAS FULLY JUSTIFIABLE? PEACOCK STATED THAT WHILE SOME LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN THE LABOR PARTY WOULD LIKE TO FORCE ALL US DEFENSE-RELATED INSTALLATIONS OUT OF AUSTRALIA, HE DID NOT CONSIDER THIS WHITLAM'S OBJECTIVE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, AS A RESULT OF THE BARNARD VISIT, THE POINT WAS ALREADY NEAR WHERE WHITLAM WOULD FEEL HE WOULD BE ABLE TO DEFEND SUCCESSFULLY THE MAINTENANCE OF REMAINING US INSTALLATIONS IN AUSTRALIA.

6. PEACOCK TOLD GREEN THAT PARTY LEADER SNEDDEN WAS OBVIOUSLY THINKING IN TERMS OF MAKING FOREIGN POLICY A MAJOR ISSUE IN ANY ELECTION THAT MIGHT COME UP WITHIN THE NEXT YEAR OR SO. PEACOCK, HOWEVER, FELT THAT DOMESTIC AFFAIRS WOULD INEVITABLY PREDOMINATE IN ANY CAMPAIGN. ON PARTY INSTRUCTIONS, HOWEVER, HE WAS PREPARING MATERIALS, TO COME OUT IN THE FORM OF A SERIES OF POLICY PAPERS, DESCRIBING THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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POSITION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY. (HE SHOWED SOME OF HIS DRAFT MATERIALS TO AMBASSADOR GREEN, WHO FOUND THEM RATHER UNREMARKABLE.)

7. PEACOCK SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD GREEN AT AUSTRALIA NATIONAL DAY PARTY THAT HE HAD HAD AN EMINENTLY SATISFACTORY NINETY MINUTES WITH SCHLESINGER, IMPLYING THAT LATTER HAD NOT HELD BACK IN HIS CRITICISMS OF GOA FOR SOME

OF ITS ILL-ADVISED STATEMENTS OVER PAST THIRTEEN MONTHS.
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